



— ♥ —
Alexandra Daniela
[25, Romanian]
&
Alexander Whitener
[27, French]



MIXED FEELINGS

To celebrate Valentine's Day, Amsterdam Magazine spoke to three couples about the challenges of their intercultural relationships. Their stories prove that, in spite of differences in beliefs and origins, even in a climate of rising intolerance, sometimes love knows no bounds - and recognises no boundaries.



'He was hesitant when we first met, because there is so much prejudice in Europe against the Roma people, and the propaganda gets to everybody. People don't know that most gypsies don't even come from Romania. I used to tease him, 'Be careful, I can read minds and tell the future. I will cast a spell on you!' And see, my magic worked ... His family has been very warm and welcoming, and the only doubt that mine has expressed is about religion. We have a strong orthodox tradition, so my aunt said we were doomed to fail because we'd never connect spiritually. A traditional orthodox wedding is also very important to my father, and, to an extent, to me as well, so Alexander may have to get baptised. But when you meet the right person, none of this matters. Colour, nationality, religion. None of this is going to break us up.'



— ♥ —
Shinta Lempers

[26, ½ Dutch, ½ Indonesian]

&

Kenneth Nelson

[??, ½ Dutch, ½ African
American]

‘When you are of mixed origins, you feel like you’re sitting between two chairs. You can either decide to feel uncomfortable, or you can be grateful to actually have more room. I don’t identify as either black or white, but because of the colour of my skin and the negative stereotypes against the Surinamese and people from the Caribbean, I felt pressure to prove I wasn’t ‘like the others’ to my girlfriends’ families. However, I immediately felt comfortable with Shinta. Not only because she’s also mixed, but because her parents really appreciate other cultures. Her father spent his life travelling the globe – he’s visited more than 140 countries. His vision of the world has given her and her siblings a very broad cultural horizon. So while our origins are very different, our cultures easily bleed into each other. As far as we’re concerned, it’s all added value.’

I first met Yolanda ten years ago, in California, and I went through a lot of pain to seduce her – but not as much pain as it caused to get her here. When she gave birth to Kai, we lived in Australia, and I was baffled to find out from the embassy that I should have recognised him before birth to give him the Dutch nationality. From then on, it was just an immigration nightmare, and our family was torn apart without any easy legal solution. They had to return to Mongolia, where there is no Dutch consulate, so Yolanda had to make regular trips to China to take care of paperwork. It was very hard on our relationship, but even more on Kai who only saw his father during short visits. She was allowed to move to Amsterdam just two months ago, so it took eight years for our family to finally be reunited. It was an incredible ordeal, and something should be done about the unfairness and inhumanity of immigration laws. But we're happy that in the end, love prevailed.



— ♥ —
Yolanda François
[30, ½ Mongolian, ½ Beninese]
&
*Jeroen van der
Schaar*
[46, Dutch]
—
Kai [8]
&
Timo [7 months]
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